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ABSTRACT

Noting that no other country in the world offers protection to offensive speech, this book provides a comprehensive account of the history of the hate speech controversy in the United States. The book examines the issue, from the conflicts over the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s and American Nazi groups in the 1930s, to the famous Skokie, Illinois episode in 1977-78, and up to and including the college campus culture wars of the 1990s. It argues that the civil rights movement played a central role in developing this country's strong free speech tradition. According to the book, the courts were very concerned about protecting the provocative and even offensive forms of expression by civil rights forces--civil rights groups, therefore, preferred to protect rather than restrict offensive speech, even if it meant protecting racist speech. Chapters in the book are: (1) Hate Speech in American History; (2) Origins of the Hate Speech Issue, 1920-1931; (3) Free Speech for Nazis? Hate Speech as a National Issue, 1933-1940; (4) The Hateful and the Hated: The Jehovah's Witnesses and the Emergence of a National Policy; (5) The Curious Rise and Fall of Group Libel in America, 1942-1952; (6) Free Speech Triumphant: From "Beauharnais" to Skokie, 1952-1978; (7) The Campus Speech Codes: Hate Speech in the 1980s and 1990s; and (8) Hate Speech and the American Community. (NKA)

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